

# Plant Fact Sheet

## SHOWY PARTRIDGE PEA

*Chamaecrista fasciculata*

(Michx.) Greene

Plant Symbol = CHFA2

Contributed by: USDA NRCS Plant Materials  
Program



© William S. Justice  
Smithsonian Institution  
@USDA NRCS PLANTS

### Alternate Names

*Cassia fasciculata* Michx., sleeping plant

### Uses

**Wildlife:** This plant provides food for birds. The seed is one of the major food items of northern bobwhite and quail because it remains in sound condition throughout the winter and early spring.

**Erosion control:** The plant can be used along road banks and stream banks to control erosion.

**Recreation and beautification:** The flowers of this plant can be used to beautify areas where wildflowers are planted.

### Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

### Description

*Chamaecrista fasciculata* (Michx.) Greene, showy partridge pea, is an annual suberect legume plant that

reaches a height of 1 to 3 feet. The leaves consist of 10 to 15 pairs of small, narrow leaflets that are somewhat delicate to the touch. The showy yellow flowers, about 1 inch across, grow 2 to 4 together in clusters on the stem. Flowers normally bloom July-September. The fruit is a straight, narrow pod 1½ to 2½ inches long, which splits along 2 sutures as it dries; the pod sides spiral to expel the seeds. The highest seed production has been obtained under 30% shade, followed in decreasing order by 55% shade, full sunlight, and dense shade.

### Adaptation and Distribution

This plant grows on a wide range of soils that are slightly acid to moderately alkaline. However, it grows best on moderately lime, well drained soils. It is important to use an adapted strain to ensure that successful reseeding will occur.

Showy partridge is distributed throughout the eastern and midwest United States. For a current distribution map, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Website.

### Establishment

Established stands should be disked lightly in the spring to expose mineral soil on which the seed can germinate. Drill seeds at 1/4 to 3/4 inch deep at a rate of 10 pounds per acre. If broadcast, seed rate should be increased and seed covered by lightly disking or by cultipacking. Planting should be conducted late winter (March) to late spring (May) while soil moisture is still high. Germination is improved by scarification of the seed prior to planting. Seed should also be inoculated with the correct rhizobial bacteria before planting. Fertilizer should be applied at the recommended rate, based on soil samples, at time of planting.

### Management

Partridge pea usually reseeds but will gradually disappear without regular maintenance. Light disking to remove weeds, small brush, and old sod is necessary for healthy plantings or natural stands. In areas where prescribed burning is permitted, controlled fire is an excellent method for controlling unwanted vegetation. Fire or disking should be done in late winter for best results. Weeds can also be controlled during the growing season by mowing over the top of the partridge pea.

**Pests and Potential Problems**

No pests reported at this time. Some sources report that this species has invasive qualities. See the PLANTS Plant Profile for this species.

**Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)**

'Comanche' (TX) and Lark Selection (AR), a selected class release from the Jamie L. Whitten Plant Materials Center in MS. 'Comanche' (variety) and Lark Selection (a selected class release from the Jamie L. Whitten Plant Materials Center (MS)).

**Prepared By & Species Coordinator:**

*USDA NRCS Plant Materials Program*

Edited: 01Feb2002 JLK; 01jun06 jsp

For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>

*The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD).*

*To file a complaint of discrimination write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

*Read about Civil Rights at the Natural Resources Conservation Service.*